

How Effective Is The Local Mental Health Clinic..Some Case Histories

(Editor's note: This is the third in a series of four articles dealing with the Harbor Area Mental Health Service, one-fifth of whose patients are from Torrance. Mental illness has been described as the nation's number 1 health problem. How is Torrance coping with it?)

By RALPH R. GOMPERTZ
Managing Editor

Does psychology really help individuals who seek good professional advice? What about mental health

clinics—particularly the one serving the Torrance area? How successful has it been? The most effective way of answering these questions is to present actual case histories.

Psychology is the great rage nowadays. Its jargon has drifted into every-day speech and its terms trip lightly from every tongue. Its concepts have come to be regarded with the same familiarity as hot dogs, pop-corn and baseball. What of psychology? Is it all that it is cracked up to be? Is it possibly the alpha and the omega of modern man?

There are many shades of opinions on the subject, ranging from those who would worship no other image besides Freud to those who would have no truck with anything smacking of the mind-doctors. These violent extremists, no doubt, will continue to battle until the last ego goes to its eternal resting place.

However, the majority of laymen and experts will hardly make such extravagant claims.

Instead, they will point modestly to the accomplishments with which psychologists and psychiatrists have been credited.

These achievements speak louder than words. They stand as human testimony that psychology has earned its place under the sun.

LOCAL CLINIC

For proof of this we need only turn to the Harbor District Mental Health Service, one-fifth of whose patients are from Torrance.

The community clinic, which is staffed by members of the Los Angeles State Mental Hygiene clinic, serves Torrance, Lomita, Harbor City, Carson, as well as the South Bay and Harbor area.

It is three years old and located at 731 South Beacon street, San Pedro (TE. 2-6464). Until July of this year, it was open only one day a week. It is now open full-time.

The clinic accepts those individuals who cannot afford private treatment. Emphasis is placed on preventing emotional disturbances or mental illness.

The clinic works with adults and children, with the emphasis being placed on children.

Do mental health clinics help? The following three cases speak for themselves:

HOSTILE SON

1. A ten-year-old boy with marked impairment of relationship with his father was extremely hostile. He continually acted out his hostility in an anti-social manner at school to the extent of indicating a potential socio-pathic personality disturbance.

The child was finally excluded from school as his rebellious behaviour could no longer be tolerated. He was restricted at home and had a home teacher. The father was discouraged and just marking time in his work.

The boy received psycho-therapy at the clinic for 14 months as did the parents. He was able to gain more effective controls over his feelings, through feeling increased confidence in himself and his worth as an individual.

His parents were helped to understand themselves better and thus improve their strained marital relations. The father progressed to a better job. The mother and father were able to be understanding parents to their son rather than angry parents.

The boy was able to return to school and make a good social and academic adjustment, as he could now free his energy to achieve, rather than to react against his parents and people like his parents (such as teachers and authorities who "want you to conform but don't give you anything..."). A child has to get love and

(Turn to Page 21)



PLAY THERAPY

Staff members at the mental health clinic can learn a lot about a child from the way it plays and expresses itself. They have been trained to analyze behavior. One member of the three-man team is Robert S. Aguado, the clinic's psychiatric social worker.—Press Photo.

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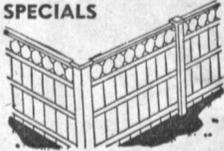
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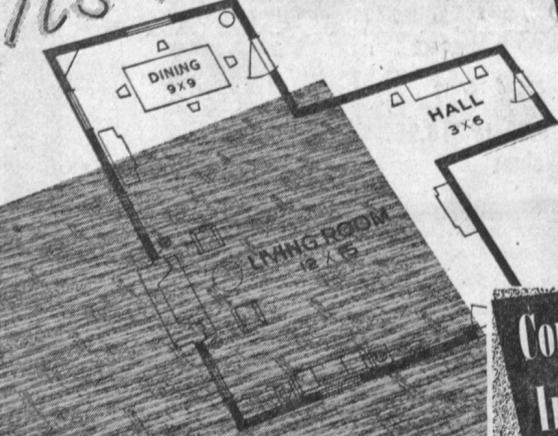
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